--This application is the United States national stage application under 35 U.S.C. § 371 of the International application PCT/FR98/02899, filed December 29, 1998, which claims priority to Application No.: FR 97 16,673, filed December 30, 1997.--

D1

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 6 and 8 according to the following, and add new claims 13-15.

Sub E3

6. (Amended) A method for detecting rheumatoid arthritis-specific autoantibodies in a biological sample comprising:

contacting said biological sample with least one antigen according to Claim 1 under conditions which allow the formation of an antigen/antibody complex with any rheumatoid arthritis-specific autoantibodies possibly present in the biological sample;

D2

removing the rest of said biological sample after said antigen/antibody complex is formed; and

detecting, by any suitable means, any antigen/antibody complex formed, whereby the presence or absence of rheumatoid arthritis-specific autoantibodies in said biological sample is determined.

D3

8. (Amended) The artificial antigen of Claim 3 wherein the antigen consists of at least one peptide comprising a tripeptide motif Ser-Cit-His, in which Cit represents a citrulline residue, which is on at least one of the citrullinated peptides derived from the sequence SEQ ID NO: 3.

Sub E5

13. (New) A peptide of claim 1, comprising the motif X1-Ser-Arg-His-X2, wherein

X1 is Ser or Gly, and

X2 is Ser or Pro.

D4

14. (New) A peptide of claim 13, comprising the motif X0-X1-Ser-Cit-His-X2, wherein

X0 is Asp.

15. (New) A peptide of claim 14, comprising the motif X0-X1-Ser-Cit-His-X2-X3, wherein

X3 is Gly or Arg.